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SUBJECT: HIGH-LEVEL FRENCH, DUTCH AND GERMAN DELEGATIONS
OVERLAP IN RWANDA

Classified By: Ambassador W. Stuart Symington for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (C) Summary: Over the last five days, senior officials from France, the Netherlands and Germany conducted multi-day visits to Rwanda. French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner used his visit to cement diplomatic relations that France and Rwanda officially restored in late 2009. He also prepared the ground for a visit by French President Sarkozy next month. The chairman of the Dutch parliament's foreign affairs committee led a multi-party parliamentary delegation to underscore Dutch support for regional human rights protection and development in Rwanda. German Minister of State for Development Assistance Dirk Niebel led a German delegation including diplomats, members of parliament and private sector leaders. They assessed assistance projects and economic development opportunities. All three delegations met widely with Rwandan public and private sector leaders. The French visit was noteworthy for the positive tone of both official meetings and of the public and press reaction. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Rwandan Foreign Minister Louise Mushikiwabo told the Ambassador that the French visit was positive, and confirmed that President Sarkozy planned to visit Rwanda in February. She underscored the commitment by both countries to cooperate constructively in addressing the region's challenges. Foreign Minister Kouchner's visit was a personal milestone, achieving--as his former assistant had told us earlier--a personal goal of seeing relations with Rwanda restored. His visit, which overlapped with the Dutch and German delegations, reflected France's intent to maintain momentum in rebuilding its ties with Rwanda. President Sarkozy's planned visit will accelerate that process next month. The chairman of Rwanda's Parliamentary committee on Foreign Relations Gedeon Kayinamura told us that Kouchner's meeting with him and other parliamentary leaders had gone well. He said that Kouchner had stressed France's conviction that Rwanda was vital to solving regional problems, a comment that Kayinamura interpreted as constructive. Kouchner also stated publicly that, without forgetting or ignoring the past, France and Rwanda were committed to working together in the future. Kouchner laid a wreath at the genocide memorial in Kigali and met with genocide survivors as well as government officials. During his visit, international media obtained and publicized an advance copy of the report by a Rwandan commission charged with investigating the 1994 downing of then-president Habyarimana's aircraft. That document, known as the Mutsinzi report, concluded that extremist elements within the former government, rather than the Rwanda Patriotic Front, shot down the aircraft. The Kouchner visit won positive public reaction, despite the fact that the Mutsinzi report noted French military personnel in the vicinity on the night of the crash. Subsequent public reaction to excerpts of the complete report published over the following days was not anti-French in character; instead, Rwandan media hailed reports of France's commitment to pursue

FDLR leaders and genocidaires as evidence of a constructive relationship.

13. (C) The Dutch Parliamentary delegation, whose chairman told us this was the largest legislative group ever to visit Rwanda, consisted of nine representatives of the governing coalition and opposition parties. At a meeting with Qcoalition and opposition parties. At a meeting with diplomats, the chairman underscored his delegation's interest in meeting earlier that day with returned FDLR fighters at the Mutobo demobilization camp. He hailed Rwanda's progress on reconciliation and stressed the Netherlands' strong interest in advancing human rights in the region. Delegation members included, among others, a liberal party representative who had advocated reducing the number of Dutch Embassies in Africa. However, delegation members highlighted the potential positive impact of Rwanda on the region, in areas ranging from cooperation on energy issues to regional economic integration in the East African Community. Asked about the imminent return to Rwanda of would-be presidential candidate Victoire Ingabire, one member of parliament exclaimed, "She's Dutch!" Another acknowledged that Ingabire, who apparently claims dual Rwandan and Dutch nationality, has long been the political figurehead of the RDR. (Note: The RDR is a political front established in 1994 in then-Zaire by self-exiled Rwandan civilian and military leaders who fled power at the end of the genocide. End Note.) Finally, the Dutch parliamentarians noted that their assistance to Rwanda had increased significantly particularly in the area of energy production, distribution within Rwanda, and links between Rwanda and its neighbors.

14. (C) The German Minister of State for Foreign Assistance

KIGALI 00000034 002 OF 002

headed the largest German delegation to visit Rwanda in years. In addition to Foreign Ministry officials, it included several members of parliament and business people. Germany, which provides budget support for Rwanda, greatly values its presence in Rwanda. Rwanda is the site of one of three radio transmission centers for Deutsche Welle, the German equivalent of VOA or BBC. Germany is also a long standing development partner both in federally funded projects and in German stakes to Rwandan bilateral projects. Though Germany was briefly Rwanda's colonial ruler (from 1892-1916), there are, surprisingly, vestiges of positive sentiment linked to the German role, especially in rural areas, that have been reinforced by subsequent development assistance.

Comment

15. (C) What looked like a European full court press and left new Rwandan Foreign Minister Louise Mushikiwabo visibly affected, was not coordinated. It followed by a few days senior delegations from Libya and China. For Germany, this visit marks a complete reversal over the last year, after its Ambassador left Rwanda in November 2008 following Germany's arrest of Rose Kabuye, the Chief of Protocol to Rwanda President Paul Kagame. As with the Netherlands, German support and other assistance have increased significantly over the past year. That, too, represents a stark change from the December 2008 decision when the Dutch, as well as the Swedes suspended some aid.

16. (C) However, the most significant visit of this charged period was that of Kouchner. He did not say the words that many Rwandans continue to expect and hope, is further evidence of the success of Rwandan-French efforts not to have their relationship in 2010 dominated by the events of 1994. That said, many in Rwanda will continue to seek an official statement of regret for France's role in Rwanda before, during and after the 1994 genocide. End Comment.

SYMINGTON